

FAMILIES FIRST KINSHIP CARE PAYMENT OVERVIEW

The Families First Kinship Care (FFKC) payment began as pilot program on April 1, 2005. The program is a collaborative effort between the Department of Children's Services (DCS) and the Department of Human services (DHS). The goal of the program is to encourage placements with relatives for children who are at risk of removal from their home and placement in state custody. The FFKC pilot program allows DCS to prevent children from entering or re-entering state custody by offering eligible relative families an additional payment to supplement the Families First Child-Only grant offered by DHS. The program is currently available in the following three regions; Davidson, Shelby and Upper Cumberland.

DCS staff in the Child Protective Services (CPS) division determines eligibility for the payments based on the requirements stated below. After eligibility has been determined, families are referred to the regional Relative Caregiver Program (RCP) for issuance of payments and supportive services. .

Payment Amounts

The FFKC monthly payment is more than the DHS Families First Grant for one child, but less than the amount paid for a foster care child. Eligible Families receive FFKC payments monthly as follows:

Children age 0 through 11 - \$5.26/day up to \$160/mo per child

Children age 12 through 18 - \$6.24/day up to \$190/mo per child

Eligibility Requirements

- Child must be a US citizen or qualified non-citizen
- Child and Caregiver must live in Tennessee and in counties of program operation
- Child must be shown to be at-risk of coming into custody. Current petition must be filed with the court stating risk.
- Caregiver must submit to a home study, which includes criminal background check and child abuse and neglect registry for adults in home (SSMS checked).
- Caregiver must apply for the Child-only grant with DHS. Eligibility for the child-only grant must be maintained for all children receiving the FFKC payment. (Note: A child in receipt of SSI benefits will not be eligible for the child-only grant or FFKC payments. However, a child in receipt of SSA survivors benefits may be eligible depending on benefit amount)
- Caregiver must be primary caregiver of child
- Countable income for the child, **plus** the child-only grant for one child (\$140/mo), must not exceed the FFKC amount for the aged child plus the child-only grant amount for one child.

For example:

Income for child age 0-11 must be below \$300/mo. (\$160 FFKC + \$140 child-only grant)

Income for child age 12-18 must be below \$330/mo. (\$190 FFKC + \$140 child –only grant)

- Child eligible up to age 18; or age 19 if still in high school or attaining equivalent.
- Countable income of Caregiver household cannot exceed 200% of the federal poverty guideline.
- Caregiver must comply and cooperate with DHS referral to Child Support Enforcement for both parents, unless granted a Good Cause Exemption.
- Biological parent must not reside within the home where child is in care of caregiver.

Procedures for DCS staff

Referrals for the payment will be made through CPS Central Intake. CPS referral may be made specifically for the payment program or a family maybe referred for the program through any CPS referral providing there are no other safety issues. Cases that are received through Central Intake should not be screened-out, but assigned the appropriate Priority and assessed.

Referral for the program made regarding families in which the child(ren) has resided in the home with the caregiver for an extended period, (1yr or more), must show a significant change in household circumstance (loss of income, extended illness or death) to show risk due to financial concerns providing no other safety issues exist.

Referrals for post custody children must show a minimum one-year continuous post custody period prior to being referred. The use of Family Support Services for children exiting custody should be identified at the Child and Family Team Meeting prior to the child's release from custody in order to stabilize the placement and reduce re-entry; thus eliminating the tendency to use FFKC to exit children from custody.

DCS Child Protective Service (CPS) will completed risk assessment for the child and file a dependent and neglect petition against the birth parent(s).

DCS staff will meet with the caregiver and other involved person to facilitate the completion the Families First Kinship Care Assessment, FFKC Payment Agreement and the DHS application for the child-only grant. This process may be initiated through a TDM or pre-custodial CTFM. DCS will determine eligibility for the FFKC payment based on information collected in the assessment tool and have caregiver complete and sign the payment agreement. The payment effective date will be the date the caregiver signs the assessment. However, it may take up to sixty days (60) to process the payment forms and issue payment to the caregiver. If needed, Family Support Services (FFS) should be utilized during this period.

DCS staff will inform the caregiver that the information they have completed will be sent to DHS for the Child-only grant and the Relative Caregiver Program for the FFKC payments. They should inform the caregiver to follow-up with the RCP concerning the status of benefits and for services provided by the RCP. The Caregiver should be provided a copy of the payment agreement.

DCS staff will fax the completed and signed DHS application to the person shown on the DHS contact list.

For families determined eligible for the FFKC payments, DCS staff will fax to the local Relative Caregiver program (see number below), the entire completed FFKC Assessment, DHS application, FFKC payment agreement, FFKC Communications form and a copy of the petition filed showing child(ren) at risk. DCS staff should report any changes in the family circumstance made known to them to the RCP.

For families determine ineligible for the payment, DCS staff will fax a copy only of the FFKC Communication form indicating the reason(s) not approve to the region's RCP. *(This will also be considered a referral to the program.)*

DCS staff should select the Assessment tab in the classification section in TNKids and record details regarding the case. DCS regional/county office should maintain the original application and petition, for future Central Office reference or inquiry.

Relative Caregiver Program (RCP) Procedures

Upon receipt of the signed FFKC Assessment, DHS application, Payment Agreement, Communication form and Petition show risk, the RCP staff will review packet to make sure all forms are included, completed and signed. This is considered a referral to the program and intake into the region RCP program should be initiated.

RCP staff will access the DHS ACCENT database to verify child(ren) in receipt of the child-only grant, payee of benefits and address.

RCP staff should present the Substitute W-9 and the ACH direct Deposit Forms to the caregiver for completion and signing. DCS Fiscal requires the original version of these forms with the caregivers "original" signature. RCP staff will mail these forms along with a copy of the Payment Agreement to the attention of the Relative Caregiver Program at Central Office for delivery to DCS Fiscal to set-up a vendor payment account for the caregiver. A copy of the Payment Agreement faxed from DCS should also be given to the caregiver to keep during this visit, if the caregiver does not have a copy. (maintain copies for RCP files)

RCP staff will follow the directions in the FFK User Manual for the ChipFins system to initiate the monthly FFKC payments to the caregiver and maintain recurring payments providing the caregiver and children continue to meet the eligibility requirement for the payments. RCP staff will make every effort to ensure that payment is issued to caregiver **within 60 days** of caregiver signing the Substitute W-9 form to set-up a vendor's account.

RCP staff will maintain accurate data on children receiving the payments as conduct annual reviews or as needed.

RCP Fax Number and Program Directors

Davidson- Ph (615) 226-4917; Fax: (615) 226-4971 (Amiee Brake)
Shelby –Ph (901) 448-3133; Fax: (901) 448-3534 (Juanita Williams)
Upper Cumberland - Ph (931) 432-4111; Fax: (931) 432-6010 (Patty Jones)
East- Ph (865)483-9111; Fax: (865) 483-9102 (Kaila Akue)

Highlights of Caregiver “Informal” Options according to the most need.

(Consider the options below in the order listed when deciding to refer the caregiver for available assistance. Some caregiver may only need referral to the RCP program and for the DHS grant, when they have sufficient resources and the child they are caring for is not at risk of entering state custody.)

CAREGIVER OPTION	SOURCE
<p>1. Relative Caregiver Program (RCP) No monthly payment is tied to the program. However, one-time Emergency or start-up assistance may be available. Eligibility criteria: a) Must be related by blood, marriage or Adoption. b) child must in the informal care of caregiver must reside within county/region of program c) child’s parent must not reside in home with child. To receive emergency/start-up assistance, household income must not Exceed 200% federal poverty guideline and child cannot be in receipt of any other type of kinship subsidy, e.g. Families First Kinship Care (FFKC) payment or Subsidized Guardianship.</p>	<p>Relative Care-Giver programs. * see contact sheet.</p>
<p>2. Families First Child-only Grant. (Caregiver <u>not</u> included) Monthly differential grant amount as follows: \$140/for 1child; \$192/for 2 children \$232/for 3 children and \$291/for 4 children. Eligibility criteria: a) child must be living in the home of a relative who is within 5th degree to the child by blood, marriage or adoption. b) child’s income must be under the Consolidated Need Standard (CNS) for aid group size. c) child must be a U.S. citizen or qualified non-citizen. d) child’s resources must by \$2000 or less.</p>	<p>Local DHS Office</p>
<p>3. Families First Regular Grant. (Caregiver included) Monthly grant amount as follows: \$95/ 1child only; \$142/ child and caregiver; \$185/ 2 children and caregiver; \$226/ 3 children and caregiver. Eligibility criteria: a) child must be living in the home of a relative who is within 5th degree to the child by blood, marriage or adoption. b) family’s income must be under the Consolidated Need Standard (CNS) for aid group size. c) family group must be U.S. citizens or qualified non-citizens. d) family’s resources must be \$2000 or less.</p>	<p>Local DHS Office</p>
<p>4. At-Risk Child Care for Child-Only Caretakers (ARCO) Child care assistance based on a sliding income scale and adjusted according to the size of the family. Each family is required to pay a portion of their childcare cost. Eligibility criteria: a) Caregivers approved for the child-only grant are referred by DHs to the childcare Specialist at the county’s Local Certificate Program to determine if qualified for program. Qualified applicants will be eligible for 12 months.</p>	<p>Local DHS Office</p>
<p>5. Families First Kinship Care payment (FFKC) DCS adds an enhanced payment to the DHS child-only or regular Families First grant as follows: \$5.26/day up to \$160/mo for children age 0-11; and \$6.24/day up to \$190/mo for children age 12-18.</p>	<p>DCS pilot Regions Shelby, Davidson, Upper Cumberland East.</p>

<p>FFKC continued</p> <p>Eligibility criteria: a) current petition must be filed with the court showing child to be at-risk of entering state custody; b) parent of child must not reside in home with child; c) relative submit to criminal background check and child abuse/neglect registry; d) appropriate relative caregiver identified; e) caregiver income does not exceed 200% of federal poverty guidelines; f) receipt of DHS grant for child; g) income (e.g., court order child support or benefits from Social Security) belonging to the child, including the DHS grant, must be <u>less than</u> the FFKC amount for the aged child plus the child-only grant amount for one child.</p>	
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